

10-1-2016

State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places they Love, Volume 2

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Recommended Citation

Shore, Nancy (2016) "State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places they Love, Volume 2," *South Carolina Libraries*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/scl_journal/vol2/iss2/8

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Abstract

Nancy Shore reviews *State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places They Love, Volume 2*.

Keywords

book review, State of the Heart



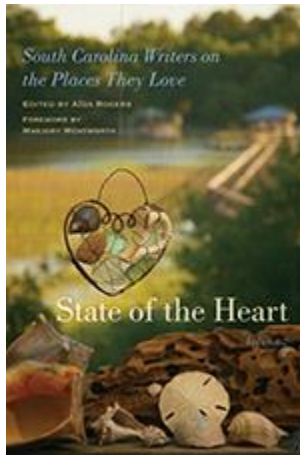
BOOK REVIEW

State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places They Love, Volume 2

University of South Carolina Press, 2015, \$39.95

"The old home began to seem like a human heart – generous, understanding, unchanged by the years, wistful and thoughtful. I began to feel that it is a terrible thing to love a place – if one must leave it." This quote by Archibald Rutledge from *I Leave Home* is an appropriate beginning to *State of the Heart Volume 2*, a 2015 edition that continues the theme of Aida Rogers's 2013 compilation. This second volume of poetry, essays, and illustrations serves as a reminder of the power of place. The forward by Marjory Wentworth, poet laureate for South Carolina, examines the beauty and difficulty of writing (poetry) under less than ideal circumstances, and includes her poem "One River, One Boat", which was written for, but cut from Governor Nikki Haley's 2014 inauguration program. Other contributors to this edition include Christopher Dickey, Margaret Shinn Evans, Patricia Moore-Pastides, and Ernest Wiggins, and contributions describe South Carolina places from Brookgreen Gardens to Beaufort, Spartanburg to Saluda County, and places in-between.

This volume, like the first, takes the reader on a tour of the Palmetto State, with a recollection of trips to the beach, love stories about vegetables, connections to sports teams, and anecdotes about family ties that will be familiar to many Southerners. The writers describe what they find endearing about the earth, water, people, places, and things familiar and memorable to them, and bring the reader along for a delightful journey through the Palmetto State. In this edition, some of the writings have



a more poignant theme, including Rose Rock's *The Soil of My Soul*, remembering painful times and situations leading up to her journey away from, and her joy and comfort in returning to, South Carolina. The section titled "Communing" blends stories about places that are sacred in differing ways: former slave communities, buildings and communities of religious significance, cemeteries, and places of natural beauty.

The connections between the diverse stories and authors in this volume are evocative of life in the south: not always beautiful, but frequently entertaining, and always full of life and powerful memories. Memories of family vacations, family events, family lore – and although these stories were not about my vacation, my events, or even my lore, I felt connected to these writers because of the shared love of place. I felt the most connection with author Michel Smoak Stone's essay *Lowcountry Tides* and this passage especially: "But you know that your happiest place on earth is there beside the river, that *that place* is your sacred place, the place where you are most connected to nature, your ancestors, and God, there among live oaks, salt breeze, exuberant mullet, and the primordial smells of the river. You know that just being there heals hurts of all kinds." To me, that is the south, and in particular, the coastal south in two sentences.

If you liked, or just wanted to read, the first volume, add this to your collection and revel in the journey home.

Nancy Shore is a MLIS student at the University of South Carolina, and hopes for a library job on a beach somewhere. She is one of a few Gamecocks in Wyoming.